



# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

[H30-560] *PORE*

JAN 17 1977

## Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Western Region

From: Director

Subject: The Sir Francis Drake Landing Site Controversy and  
the Quadracentennial in 1979

This memorandum responds to Acting Regional Director McDowell's memorandum of November 23 and reflects the telephone conversation of January 6 between you and Bob Utley.

We do not believe a further review of the controversy by a "court" of specialists under National Park Service auspices is obligatory, warranted, or advisable. It is not the Service's responsibility, legal, professional, or moral, to settle an issue of such complexity when the historical profession itself has been unable to do so. Only when sound evidence is produced that results in a consensus in the professional community--i.e., when there is no longer a serious controversy--may we pronounce a definitive conclusion.

In assembling and funding the 1971 panel of experts, the Service more than met its responsibilities and fully responded to the concerns of the Drake Navigators Guild. The members of that panel were and are reputable, conscientious scholars. That one may have since associated himself with a competing site does not reflect upon his integrity or objectivity or the professional quality of the panel's deliberations and conclusions. The proposition that one may never deviate, in the light of further evidence or reflection, from a position hitherto taken is too patently untenable to require refutation.

We are not aware that additional significant evidence has been found since 1971. A new panel, then, could only examine and ponder more refined or elaborate reasoning based on the old evidence. While this might increase the presumptive validity of the Drake's Bay site, it is not likely to prove conclusive, especially for National Register purposes. Even if Drake's Bay were fairly conclusively the location, we doubt that a site specifically enough defined for National Register purposes could be delineated.



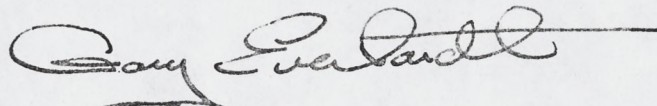


We have the responsibility to interpret our parks. The evidence is sufficient to point to Drake's Bay as the presumptive site, and we should do so in our Point Reyes interpretive program, but always with the qualification that the site is disputed. We believe this to be all we can reasonably be expected to do in the matter.

We do not see why conclusive identification, however desirable, is essential to planning and staging the Drake Quadricentennial observance. There is no reason why ceremonies should not be held at the probable site or any other appropriate location. It is Drake and his achievements that we are recalling, and a provable landing site is not a condition for a successful commemorative observance.

As you have stressed, however, the Drake Navigators Guild feels that we have closed our minds and are unwilling to listen. The 1971 panel, which we organized and funded, sufficiently belies that proposition, but as you note this feeling persists anyway. Therefore, despite the risks, we support your proposal to ask your Regional Advisory Committee, composed with one exception (an anthropologist) of laymen, to visit the Drake's Bay site in company with officials of the Guild, listen to their recitation of the evidence, and recommend to you what further steps, if any, they feel you should take to satisfy the purposes of the Guild. We emphasize, though, that both the Committee and the Guild should clearly understand that this exercise is procedural and not substantive--that the Committee will not pronounce a conclusion on the historical issue; and that the Service is not bound to mediate or resolve this controversy or follow the recommendations of the Committee.

We shall be glad to help in any way we can as this issue is further developed by your office.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Gary Everhardt", with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Gary Everhardt